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Author(s): William E. Connolly

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BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault

WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY
Johns Hopkins University

To be ashamed of one's immorality—that is a step on the staircase at whose end one is also ashamed of one's morality.

—Friedrich Nietzsche¹

THE EVIL OF GOODNESS

Is Foucault, who continues to live among us, a creative carrier of a generous sensibility? Or a dangerous thinker who threatens political restraint by scrambling fundamental parameters of morality? He is both. He challenges established morality in pursuit of a higher ethical sensibility, but danger is inscribed in the effort to shift the terms and bases of these doctrines. For to challenge fixed conceptions of will, identity, responsibility, normality, and punishment is to be cruel to people (and aspects of oneself) attached to established moral codes; it is to open up new uncertainties within established terms of judgment; and, sometimes it is to incite punitive reactions among those whose sense of moral self-assurance has been jeopardized. The Foucauldian sensibility shares these characteristics with every experiment in morality, including those enacted today in courts, families, schools, churches, hospitals, armies, welfare offices, prisons, and workplaces.

Foucault's ethical sensibility of "care" amidst social conflict and coordination operates, then, within a series of paradoxes that threaten to derail it. But, as I receive his political spirituality, the most promising route is to struggle to overcome resentment against the paradoxical circumstances in which we are set (for no god guarantees life without paradox; indeed, most

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of the ones I have encountered embody it), and to negotiate this slippery terrain with intellectual care and political daring. (Or vice versa? I'm not sure.)

Let me consider a recent essay by James Miller to introduce the Foucauldian sensibility I admire. Miller seeks to protect a liberal politics of limits against Foucauldian assaults on the morality of good and evil. He thinks that liberalism, with its commitment to rule of law, rights, and individual responsibility provides the conditions for a politics of limits. Foucault blurs these limits and threatens those moral stabilizations. In Foucault's 1971 interview with *Actuel*, "the most freewheeling magazine of the French counter-culture," Miller finds Foucault running roughshod over the limits that freedom and order require.² Miller informs us that the interview is entitled "Beyond Good and Evil," that Foucault attacks humanism because it "restricts the drive for power," (a fragment from Foucault), and that Foucault wages "total war against society" (Miller's phrase). This sounds like a refusal of self-limitation, alright—one, as Miller puts it, that Foucault reconsidered in his later work when he moved closer to liberalism.

But I find this same 1971 interview to embody an admirable ethical sensibility, one in which ingredients crucial to a future perspective are outlined with insufficient introduction of reservations and cautions that become installed later. Foucault finds a covert problem of evil to be lodged within the conventional politics of good and evil. Evil not as actions by immoral agents who freely transgress the moral law but evil as arbitrary cruelty installed in regular institutional arrangements taken to embody the Law, the Good, or the Normal. Foucault contends, along with Nietzsche, Arendt, and Todorov, that systemic cruelty flows regularly from the thoughtlessness of aggressive conventionality, the transcendentalization of contingent identities, and the treatment of good/evil as a duality wired into the intrinsic order of things. A modern problem of evil resides, paradoxically, within the good/evil duality and numerous dualities linked to it. Evil, again, not as gratuitous action by free agents operating in an innocent institutional matrix but as undeserved suffering imposed by practices protecting the reassurance (the goodness, purity, autonomy, normality) of hegemonic identities. To reach "beyond" the politics of good and evil is not to liquidate ethics but to become ashamed of the transcendentalization of conventional morality. It is to subject morality to strip searches.

There is cruelty involved in such strip searches. But they also take a precarious step toward a social ethic of generosity in relations among alternative, problematic, and (often) rival identities. They promote a politics of limits through genealogies of ambiguity and arbitrariness in cultural norms

that have become naturalized. This agenda can be heard in lines from the essay in question:

The campaign against drugs is a pretext for the reinforcement of social repression; not only through police raids, but also through the indirect exaltation of the normal, rational, conscientious, and well-adjusted individual.³

We emphasize the fear of criminals; we brandish the threat of the monstrous so as to reinforce the ideology of good and evil, of the things that are permitted and prohibited—precisely those notions which teachers are now somewhat embarrassed to communicate.⁴

And then, in response to a suggestion that the distinction between the normal and the pathological is today more fundamental than that between good and evil, Foucault says,

They reinforce each other. When a judgment cannot be framed in terms of good and evil, it is stated in terms of normal and abnormal. And when it is necessary to justify this last distinction, it is done in terms of what is good or bad for the individual. These are expressions that signal the fundamental duality of Western consciousness.⁵

What, then, is the ethical point of genealogies of good/evil and normal/abnormal? Foucault, at a later stage, suggests it:

We have to dig deeply to show how things have been historically contingent, for such and such a reason intelligible but not necessary. We must make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness, and deny its necessity. We must think that what exists is far from filling all possible spaces.⁶

Several elements in the Foucauldian ethical sensibility are discernible here:

1. Genealogical analyses that disturb the sense of ontological necessity, historical inevitability, and purity of discrimination in established dualities of identity/difference, normality/abnormality, innocence/guilt, crime/accident, and responsible agency/delinquent offender.
2. Active cultivation of the capacity to subdue resentment against the absence of necessity in what you are and to affirm the ambiguity of life without transcendental guarantees.
3. Development of a generous sensibility that informs interpretations of what you are and are not and infuses the relations you establish with those differences through which your identity is defined.
4. Explorations of new possibilities in social relations opened up by genealogy, particularly those that enable a larger variety of identities to coexist in relations

of "studied" indifference on some occasions, alliance on others, and agonistic respect during periods of rivalry and contestation.

Together these elements suggest the "political spirituality" of Foucauldianism, or if you think I project too much into these texts, Fou-connoism. Indeed, in what follows I use Nietzsche to fill out Foucault and Foucault to fill out Nietzsche until we reach a perspective I am willing to endorse.

FROM MORALITY TO ETHICS

If you think that a stubborn source of evil resides in the paradoxical relation of identity to the differences through which it is constituted, you might deploy genealogy to expose the constructed, contingent, and relational character of established identities. Doing so to contest the conversion of difference into otherness by individuals and collectivities striving to erase evidence of dependency on the differences they contest. Doing so to open up other relational possibilities between interdependent, contending identities by subtracting the sense of necessity from every identity.

But many moralists find such a strategy to be self-defeating. Every neo-Kantian and teleocommunitarian in North America, for instance, has issued this charge against Foucault (and those lumped with him as "postmodernists") at some point during the decade of the 1980s. Those who pursue genealogy for ethical reasons, it seems, are caught in a pragmatic contradiction or trapped in a (unique) pit of incoherencies; as a result, they emerge either as nihilists who refuse ethical restraint or as parasites who are killing the moral host they suck sustenance from. How can you have a morality without grounding it in the Law or the Good, or, at the very least, in the Contract, the Rational Consensus, the Normal, or the Useful?

From my (Foucauldian) perspective, these responses too often reflect a transcendental egoism that requires contestation. Each is egoistic because it silently takes its own fundamental identity to be the source that must guide moral life in general; it is transcendental because it insists that its identity is anchored in an intrinsic Purpose or Law or potential consensus that can be known to be true. In Nietzsche's language, such transcendental egoists insist "I am morality itself and nothing besides is morality." They veil egoism in the demand to universalize what they are by presenting it as what they are commanded to be by the Law or elevated to by experience of the Good. They present themselves as disinterested *servants* of the Law or the Good, and they

respond to each challenge to their ego-idealism through a ritual of reiteration, restating the external, necessary, intrinsic character of the fundament they serve.⁷

But so what? How does this rejoinder speak to the fundamental question posed to the genealogist? That is, "How can a *genealogist* cultivate an ethical sensibility? And what makes such a sensibility *ethical*?" A Foucauldian line of reply might be to challenge theories of intrinsic moral order with a competing ethical sensibility: to create a little space between morality and ethics—with appropriate apologies to Hegel.

A moralist often (but not always) thinks that a moral code can be separated from other elements in social and political practice and presented more or less systematically, whereas a post-Nietzschean thinks that, at best, an ethical sensibility can be cultivated that informs the quality of future interpretations, actions, and relationships. More definitively, a moralist explicitly or implicitly gives priority to the idea of a fundamental order of identity, gender, sexuality, and so on governing cultural formations. One type accentuates the verb form "to order," construing morality to be obedience to a god or nature or the dictates of reason or a transcendental argument or a categorical imperative. Another accentuates the noun form "order," construing "moral order" now as an inherent, harmonious design of being. Both types often anchor moral order in a god, either as a commander of last resort, a postulate required to give virtue its just reward in the last instance, or an ultimate source of the harmonious design discernible in being. Those who eschew a theological story present narratives in which the fundamental nature of things is supposed to be highly compatible with strong conceptions of identity, agency, rationality, autonomy, responsibility, and punishment. The moralist, to put it briefly, finds some way or other to smooth out Nietzschean conceptions of "life," "will to power," "*differance*," and so on in the name of a smooth moral economy of equivalences, by projecting an intrinsic purpose, a law, or the plasticity of nature/bodies into the order of things.⁸

Moral order as inherent command or harmonious purpose or as (inter)subjective imposition by humans whose subjectivity acts upon plastic bodies and nature—often these are united in some unstable combination. Sometimes, such perspectives are explicitly articulated, but more often today they are implicitly installed in narratives of nature, identity, gender, sexuality, agency, normality, responsibility, freedom, and goodness.

A post-Nietzschean ethical sensibility might, first, claim that most contemporary moralists are implicated in one or several of these moral economies, and, second, contest the sense that they exhaust the range of admirable alternatives. As the contestation proceeds, instructive points of convergence

unfold between one traditional type of moral order delineated above—the design/teleological conception—and a post-Nietzschean sensibility.

Consider a few intersections between a teleological morality and an antiteleological ethic. First, both challenge authoritarian temptations residing within the command tradition. Second, both construe the self to be a complex microsocial structure, replete with foreign relations, rather than a “disengaged” unit solid or universal enough to anchor morality in itself. Third, both oppose, though differently, plastic conceptions of nature and bodies often presupposed by command theories, paying attention to how human powers of agency and mastery are inflated by these presumptions of plasticity and “disembodiment.” Fourth, both pursue a morality/ethics of cultivation in place of one of command or rational demonstration: neither attempts to isolate a systematic “moral theory”; each cultivates a *sensibility* that enters into the interpretations and actions it endorses.⁹

It is this last intersection I will pursue. Both the genealogist and the teleologist, then, advance an ethics of cultivation. What is cultivated? Not a Law or a categorical imperative but possibilities of being imperfectly installed in established institutional practices. Where are these possibilities located? How are they cultivated? These are the difficult questions for both perspectives.¹⁰

Charles Taylor, to my mind the most thoughtful and flexible among contemporary defenders of a teleocommunitarian morality, speaks of “moral sources” ambiguously lodged between established practices and a higher, fugitive experience of intrinsic purpose floating above them. Taylor’s “moral sources” are neither simple objects to be represented nor transcendental laws to be deduced. A “source” changes as it is drawn into discursive practice, but it also provides indispensable sustenance from which moral articulation draws:

Moral sources empower. To come closer to them, to have a clearer view of them, to come to grasp what they involve, is for those who recognize them to be moved to love or respect them, and through this love/respect to be better enabled to live up to them. And articulation can bring them closer. That is why words can empower; why words can at times have tremendous moral force.¹¹

If you substitute genealogy for articulation, affirm for recognize, ethical sensibility for moral force, and (reading between the lines) “the abundance of life” for “a purposive god,” you have at once marked momentary points of convergence and fundamental lines of divergence between a teleocommunitarian morality and an agonopluralistic ethic. These two orientations produce each other as competitors; they manufacture a competition in which neither is in a good position to write its adversary off as inconceivable, incoherent, or unthinkable because the elements of strength and weakness in

each are too close for comfort to those in the other. These two sensibilities are well-suited—to use terms to be redeemed later—to enter into competitive relations of agonistic respect.

Taylor almost recognizes this moment of affinity within difference with respect to Nietzsche, but he fails to do so with respect to Foucault and Derrida. Nonetheless, the line of demarcation he draws between a viable moral sensibility and the amorality of “postmodernism” cannot be sustained once Nietzsche has been admitted into the charmed circle of ethics. Taylor anchors his highest morality in an ambiguous relation between two dimensions: an identity deepening itself through progressive attunement to a higher purpose in being. A post-Nietzschean might draw corollary sustenance from a contingent identity affirming the rich abundance of “life” exceeding every particular organization of it. In the Nietzschean tradition, such fugitive sources as “life,” “bodies,” “earth,” “will to power,” “the oblivion of difference,” “*differance*,” “resistances,” an “untamed exteriority,” and “untruth” play a structural role remarkably close to the roles that “a god,” “intrinsic purpose,” “a higher direction,” and “the essentially embodied self” play in the teleological tradition that Taylor invokes. Several of the anarchistic sources on the first list serve, in Nietzsche’s texts, as contestable “conjectures” or projections informing the ethical sensibility he cultivates. Genealogy takes you to the edge of the abyss of difference, even though it cannot bring this surplus within and around the organization of things to presence.¹²

Taylor’s sources also embody this ambiguous, fugitive character because the higher direction cultivated is never fully articulable by finite beings and because human articulation always changes the inchoate source it draws into the (revised) linguistic web. Nietzsche, Foucault, and Taylor (almost) converge in grasping the productive role of excess in ethico-political interpretation, separating themselves from a host of realists and rationalists who either have yet to plumb this dimension of their own practices or (as Taylor may do) are driven to treat the experience of excess as a “lack” or “fault” in a divided self always yet to be remedied.

In Nietzsche’s work, as I read it, “life,” and other terms of its type, functions as an indispensable, nonfixable marker, challenging every attempt to treat a concept, settlement, or principle as complete, without surplus or resistance. This projection challenges alternatives that project a commanding god, a designing god, an intrinsic identity, or the sufficiency of reason. The case for it is closely linked to recurrent demonstrations of the operational failure of the other contenders to achieve the presence their representatives (sometimes) promise.¹³ The excess of life over identity provides the fugitive source from which one comes to appreciate, and perhaps to love, the an-archy of being amidst the organ-ization of identity\difference.

Genealogy by itself can lead either to repression of the experience of contingency it enables or to passive nihilism. Unless genealogy is combined with tactics applied by the self to itself it may well fuel the very resentment against the an-archy of being its advocates are trying to curtail. That is why Nietzsche and Foucault alike are involved serially with the genealogy of fixed experience and the application of tactics by the self to itself. Both are crucial to the generous or "noble" sensibility endorsed by each. Neither alone nor both in conjunction can *guarantee* the effects sought. This latter acknowledgment is a defining mark of a post-Nietzschean sensibility because the demand for guarantees in this area is precisely what fosters the most authoritarian versions of the moralities of Law and Purpose.

A post-Nietzschean ethical sensibility, then, strives, first, to expose artifice in hegemonic identities and the definitions of otherness (evil) through which they propel their self-certainty; second, to destabilize codes of moral order within which prevailing identities are set, when doing so crystallizes the element of resentment in these constructions of difference; third, to cultivate generosity—that is, a "pathos of distance"—in those indispensable rivalries between alternative moral/ethical perspectives by emphasizing the contestable character of each perspective, including one's own, and the inevitability of these contestations in life; and fourth—as Foucault eventually endorsed—to contest moral visions that suppress the constructed, contingent, relational character of identity with a positive alternative that goes some distance in specifying the ideal of political life inspiring it.¹⁴ I draw these themes from Foucault and Nietzsche, respectively: the ethical importance of the struggle against existential resentment is emphasized by Nietzsche, and the politicization of an ethical sensibility is emphasized by Foucault. Before pursuing Foucault on the second register, let me quote from the madman himself concerning the basis of an admirable ethical sensibility:

Thus I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises: but I do *not* deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises and acted in accordance with them. —I also deny immorality: *not* that countless people *feel* themselves to be immoral, but that there is any *true* reason so to feel. It goes without saying that I do not deny—unless I am a fool—that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged—but I think that one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently*—in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently*.¹⁵

The "we" is a solicitation rather than a command. A new sensibility is *rendered possible* through genealogies. Then a set of experiments is enacted by the self upon its self to revise vengeful sensibilities that have become

fixed. Nietzsche, like Foucault after him, commends a set of artful techniques to modify these contingent installations, these “feelings.” The sensibility that these techniques install functions as a corollary to the cultivation of “virtues” in teleological theories. Thus, to cite one example of such a practice, Nietzsche in *Daybreak* marks the importance of “little deviant acts” in a life where accumulated conventions are always becoming naturalized and moralized. “For nothing *matters more*,” Nietzsche asserts, “than that an already mighty, anciently established and irrationally recognized custom should be once more confirmed by a person recognized as rational. . . . All respect to your opinions! But *little deviant acts are worth more*.”¹⁶ Ethical generosity becomes effective when it is installed in the feelings, and this involves a series of tactics patiently applied by a self to itself: “All the virtues and efficiency of body and soul are acquired laboriously and little by little, through much industry, self-constraint, limitation, through much obstinate, faithful repetition of the same labors, the same renunciations.”¹⁷ Echoes from the Christian tradition can be heard here as elsewhere in Nietzsche, but these techniques of the self are designed to foster affirmation of a contingent, incomplete, relational identity interdependent with differences it contests rather than to discover a transcendental identity waiting to be released or to acknowledge obedience to a commanding/designing god.

When Nietzsche, and later Foucault, commend the self as a work of art acting modestly and artfully upon its own entrenched contingencies, the aim is not self-narcissism, as neo-Kantians love to insist. *The point is to ward off the violence of transcendental narcissism*: to modify sensibilities of the self through delicate techniques, to do so to reach “beyond good and evil,” so that you no longer require the constitution of difference as evil to protect a precarious faith in an intrinsic identity or order. The goal is to modify an already contingent self—working within the narrow terms of craftsmanship available to an adult—so that you are better able to ward off the demand to confirm transcendently what you are contingently.¹⁸ In Foucault’s terms, “care of the self” is the operative practice. In Nietzsche’s terms,

one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art; only then is a human being at all tolerable to behold. Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge; and we others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight.¹⁹

The “ugliness” that Nietzsche opposes, then, reflects the demand to ratify a contingent identity by transcendental means. Look around at the next faculty meeting if you need empirical verification of this ratification process.

But so far I have merely outlined some of the aspirations within this ethical sensibility. We have so far only glimpsed the dangers, paradoxes, and limits within which it operates.

THE ONTOLOGICAL PROBLEMATIC

Foucault resists the language of "life" that Nietzsche invokes.²⁰ He does so, I think, to fend off the suggestion such a term conveys to some (though not to the mature Nietzsche) either of an elemental energy directly accessible to experience by nonlinguistic means or of a vital, purposive force that must be allowed expression regardless of the implications it carries for anyone or anything else. But if Foucault denies a law or purpose in being while also resisting the language of life (and "will to power"), does this mean that the ethical sensibility he endorses is free of ontological (or "essentialist") dimensions?²¹ Does this sensibility liquidate every semblance of "the universal"?

In a recent essay on Foucault's "cultivation of the self" Pierre Hadot asserts that Foucault misreads the Stoics and the Epicureans in a way that vitiates his own ethic. To these Greeks, "the point was not to forge a spiritual identity by writing but to free oneself from one's individuality, to raise oneself to universality."²² Foucault's reduction of the universal back into the individual, Hadot fears, results in a solipsistic self: "by defining his ethical model as an ethic of existence, Foucault might have been advancing a cultivation of the self which was too purely aesthetic—that is to say, I fear a new form of dandyism, a late-twentieth century version."²³ I fear that Hadot, in the company of others, collapses the space in which the distinctive Foucauldian sensibility is formed, doing so by the way he deploys "the universal" in relation to "the self," the "aesthetic," and "dandyism."

Foucault, I want to say, affirms a hypothetical universal that does not conform to any possibility that Hadot recognizes. He affirms a hypothetical, ontological universal, one designed to disturb the closure and narcissism of dogmatic identities, one affirmed to be a contestable projection, and one treated as an alternative to ontologies of Law and Purpose. Foucault struggles, against the grain of the language he uses and is used by, not to project a "logic" or order into the fundamental character of being. He invokes what might be called an *ontology*, a "reading" of the fundamental character of being that resists imputing a logic to it and affirms its alogical character. It is this fugitive, deniable, and contestable experience, always resistant to articulation, that is approached through the arts of genealogy and affirmed through techniques of the self. And it is this critical task that must be renewed

perpetually because of pressures installed in language and other elements of communal life to reinstate the fundamental “logic” of good and evil into the experience of being.

Consider again a quotation presented earlier. Foucault says “we have to dig *deeply* to show how things have been historically *contingent*, . . . intelligible but not *necessary*”. . . , making “the intelligible appear against a *background of emptiness*.” A deep contingency, a lack of necessity in things, a background of emptiness—these themes, inserted into the agenda of genealogy, gesture toward the ont-allogical universal Foucault would endorse. The “emptiness” of things suggests the absence of a Law or Purpose governing existence. In a similar way, numerous expressions of “plentitude,” “doubles,” and an “untamed exterior” gesture toward an abundance that exceeds any particular set of conventions without assuming the form of a Law, Identity, or Purpose governing things—an emptiness with respect to an intrinsic order, an abundance with respect to any fixed organ-ization of actuality. These are fugitive experiences to cultivate through genealogy, doing so to enhance generosity in rivalries between identity and alter-identity that provide each with its ambiguous conditions of existence.²⁴

In one essay, Foucault strives to express this ontological problematic most actively. Here he makes it clear that the ont-alogy installed in his researches is not one that is or is likely to become known to be true. It takes the form of a “happy posit-ivism” (dash added) or “critical principle” through which questions are posed and critical comparisons with other positions are explored. It shares this paradoxical character with all other fundaments presumed or posited to date in ethico-political interpretation, even though many of the latter strive so hard to conceal this status of their own faith. Allow me to condense a few pages in “The Order of Discourse” into a few lines, doing so to underline how Foucault both elaborates his stance and exposes tactics by which alternative stances of its type conceal their posit-ivistic and comparative character.

“*It seems to me*,” Foucault says, “that beneath this apparent veneration of discourse, under this apparent logophilia, a certain fear is hidden. *It is just as if* prohibitions, thresholds and limits have been set up in order to master, at least partly, the great proliferation of discourse in order to remove from its richness its most dangerous part.” Next, marching orders are presented to those who endorse such semblances: “And *if* we want to” . . . analyze the terms of this fear, *then* “we must call into question our will to truth” . . . ; “we must not imagine there is a great unsaid or a great unthought . . . which we would have to articulate or think at last” . . . ; “we must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher.” This stack of negative imperatives, stretched in front of a small “if,” finally culminates in an affirmative whose standing at the end of a long

chain of hypotheticals has (almost) been forgotten: "We must conceive discourse as a violence which we do things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity."²⁵

Two things. First, Foucault's conception of discourse, containing its own uncertainties and proliferations, is initially presented as a critical principle "we" pursue in our researches. But as the imperatives that operationalize this practice pile up, it shortly begins to be heard as an imperative of being as such. The positivism on which it is founded is all too easy to forget. This contrived forgetfulness, condensed into the space of a couple of pages, mimics and exposes the ontological forgetfulness of moralist-political discourse. The hypothetical character of the fundamental presumptions becomes buried beneath the weight of discursive practice, and because it is impossible to proceed without implicitly invoking some set of fundamentals, this set, too, all too readily becomes received as a set of absolute imperatives installed in the order of things. Genealogy breaks up this inertia of presumption that constantly reinstates itself as Nature, God, Law, or Purpose; it scrambles the sense of ontological necessity implicit in contingent consolidations.²⁶

Second, Foucault contests implicit and explicit ontologies of intrinsic order and plasticity not simply by showing how each conceals the hypothetical character and multiple sites of undecidability in its own imperatives but also by projecting in competition with them an (always underdeveloped) ontology of that which is "violent, pugnacious, disorderly . . . , perilous, incessant . . . , and buzzing" within discursive practice.

If this antilogical logos is hypothetical, comparative, and problematical, why struggle to operationalize it through critical comparison to other familiar alternatives? There is unlikely to be a final answer to this question, just as there is none forthcoming with respect to the alternatives against which it contends. But one response resides in the fact that every interpretation presupposes or invokes some such problematical stance with respect to the fundamental character of being; to try to eliminate such a stance altogether from interpretation is either to repress crucial dimensions of one's own perspective or to lapse into a passive nihilism of resolute silence. Passive nihilism cedes the activity of interpretation to dogmatic perspectives; it secretly concedes too much to fundamentalists by treating the problematical standing of its own projections as a sufficient reason to withdraw from the field of interpretation. It still presumes that this condition of discourse is a "fault" or "lack" that "ought not to be" rather than a productive source of creativity that makes life possible and keeps things moving.

The Foucauldian problematic elicits fugitive, subterranean elements in contemporary experience, where old verities have fallen onto hard times and

where the sense of violence in them may be more palpable to more people. Foucault's ontological projection speaks to a problematical experience increasingly available, while contending against insistencies and resentments that press us to deny, evade, avoid, or defer its fugitive power. Its thematization alters the terms of contestation in political discourse. Familiar debates between the advocates of Law, Purpose, and Normality no longer seem to exhaust the available terms of debate. The sense of necessity governing the old debate is broken, and a set of complementary assumptions not subjected to debate by these debating partners now become open to interrogation. Each alternative, including the one Foucault advances, is now more likely to be received as a "problematic" than as a "position" or "theory": it is construed as a particular, tension-ridden gathering of impulses, insistences, presumptions, and questions through which interpretation proceeds rather than as a coherent set of imperatives on which it "rests."²⁷ Such a modification in the terms of self-presentation can have salutary effects on the character of ethical discourse.

Foucault identifies, though more lightly and obliquely than the mentor who inspires him, *ressentiment* as a source from which the problematics of moral order are constructed. Some of us now begin to hear each of these orientations as point and counterpoint in the same melody of deniable revenge; more of us refuse to treat them as The Set that exhaust the possible terms of ethical debate. Foucault says,

Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society. That is why nothing irritates me as much as these inquiries—which are by definition metaphysical—on the foundations of power in a society or the self-institution of a society, etc. These are not fundamental phenomena. There are only reciprocal relations, and the perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another.²⁸

It will assist my reading if you read the first sentence along two registers: "Nothing is *fundamental*" in the sense that no fundamental Law or Purpose or Contract governs things; "*Nothing* is fundamental" in the sense that energies and forces exceeding the social construction of subjects and things circulate through "gaps" in these institutionalizations.

So there is a politics of forgetfulness built into the character of language, the imperatives of social coordination, the drives to revenge against the contingency of things, and the insecurities of identity. Genealogy disturbs this forgetfulness, in the interests of drawing us closer to the experience that nothing is fundamental. The results of genealogy are then to be translated into noble effects, as you reach toward a sensibility beyond good and evil. But how can this combination of genealogical disturbance and noble sensibility ever establish itself securely in a self or a culture at any particular time?

It cannot. The Nietzsche/Foucault sensibility (taking various forms such as passing by, generosity, agonistic respect, a pathos of distance, the spiritualization of enmity) consists of a set of elements that cannot be combined together perfectly at any single time. They lack "compossibility" not because of "weakness of will" or "the crooked timber of humanity," where the primordial "fault" resides within the self, but because the accentuation of one element in this combination at any moment necessarily impedes the other at that time. The (post) Nietzschean ideals of nobility, a pathos of distance, agonistic care, and passing by never arrive; they are at best always coming to be. One element is always incompletely articulated with the other to which it must be united. Here we encounter a "rift" or dissonance not within but between human capacity and the temporality in which it is set:

More and more it seems to me that the philosopher, being of *necessity* a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has always found himself, and *had* to find himself in contradiction to his today.²⁹

This means, I take it, not only that the cultivator of such a sensibility regularly encounters conflict with a culture inscribed by the logic of good and evil, but that the pursuer, given the continuing power of forgetfulness amidst the quest to incorporate generosity into one's corporeal sensibilities, always has more to do to arrive beyond the logic of good and evil. To celebrate such a philosophy is always to offer "A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future," and that paradoxical condition too must be affirmed by those who struggle against *ressentiment*. Foucault places this Nietzschean theme on a political register when he says, perhaps in response to a question posed by Charles Taylor during a collective interview, "the farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality."³⁰ In a Nietzschean-Foucauldian world, something is always out of joint ethically because it is impossible to combine all the elements of nobility perfectly in one site at one time. The struggle to reach beyond good and evil is salutary, but the claim to have arrived there is always a falsification that reiterates the dogmatism of the duality you oppose. That is why, I think, Foucault celebrates the ambiguity of politics and finds politics, in one of its registers or another, always to be appropriate.

AN ETHICO-POLITICAL SPIRITUALITY

An ethical sensibility, *anchored* in an ontological problematic, *rendered* through genealogies of the possible, *cultivated* through tactics applied by the

self to itself, *embodied* as care for an enlarged diversity of life in which plural constituencies coexist in more creative ways than sustained by a communitarian idea of harmony or a liberal idea of tolerance, *politicized* through a series of critical engagements with established social apparati of good/evil, normal/abnormal, guilt/innocence, rationality/irrationality, autonomy/dependence, security/insecurity. Several of these dimensions can be heard in the following celebration of "curiosity":

I like the word [curiosity]. It evokes "care"; it evokes the care of what exists and might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way . . . ; a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.³¹

Let me locate this sensibility more actively on a political register. I do so, first, by modifying the received democratic imaginary to correspond more closely to a timely politics of care for the strife and interdependence of contingent identity/difference relations; second, by considering what relationships such a sensibility might strive to establish with the fundamentalisms circulating through contemporary life; and, third, by engaging tensions that persist between an ethic of cultivation and persistent circumstances of political engagement.

Foucault does not articulate a vision of democracy. His early objections against political ideals as prisons militates against it; and his later, cautious affirmation of a positive political imagination never takes this form. But numerous comments in the context of his participation in public protests and demonstrations are suggestive on this score. It seems to me that a series of correspondences can be delineated between the ethical sensibility cultivated by Foucault and an ethos of democracy they invoke. Consider three dimensions of democratic practice in this light.³²

1. *Democracy within the territorial state.* A viable democratic ethos embodies a productive ambiguity at its very core. Its role as an instrument of rule and governance is balanced and countered by its logic as a medium for the periodic disturbance and denaturalization of settled identities and sedimented conventions. Both dimensions are crucial. But the second functions politically to extend the cultural effects of genealogy, to open up the play of possibility by subtracting the sense of necessity, completeness, and smugness from established organizations of life. If the democratic task of governance ever buries the democratic ethos of disturbance and politicization under the weight of national consensus, historical necessity, and state security, state mechanisms of electoral accountability will be reduced to conduits

for the production of internal/external others against whom to wage moral wars of all too familiar sorts.

2. *The limits of the state.* We live during a time when an asymmetry between the globalization of relations and the confinement of electoral institutions to the territorial state functions too often to intensify state chauvinism and violence. The nostalgia in political theory (and many other sites, too) for a "politics of place," in which territoriality, sovereignty, electoral accountability, nationality, and public belonging must all map the same space, depoliticizes global issues and fosters democratic state chauvinism. During the late-modern time, productive possibilities of thought and practice might be opened up by a creative disaggregation of elements in the modern democratic imagination, paying attention, for instance, to how a democratic ethos might exceed the boundaries of the state, even when electoral institutions of democratic accountability are confined to the state. During a time when corporate structures, financial institutions, intelligence networks, communication media, and criminal rings are increasingly global in character, democratic energies, active below and through the state, might also reach beyond these parameters to cross-national, extrastatist social movements. A new and timely pluralization of attachments, identifications, and spaces of political action, already unfolding before us in the late-modern era, might eventually compromise the state's ability to colonize the terms of collective identity at key historical moments. Foucault's 1981 declaration at a press conference on behalf of the boat people is suggestive on this score in its protest against treatment of the stateless by states, in its insistence on extending political identifications beyond the state, and in its identification of that which diverse constituencies within states share that might serve as a contingent basis for extrastatist, cross-national mobilization:

There exists an international citizenry that has its rights, that has its duties, and that is committed to rise up against every abuse of power, no matter who the author, no matter who the victims. After all, we are all ruled, and as such, we are in solidarity. . . . The will of individuals must be inscribed in a reality that the governments wanted to monopolize. This monopoly must be wrested from them bit by bit, each and every day.³³

3. *The politicization of nonstatist global movements.* Boundary-crossing political movements, with respect to, say, gay/lesbian rights, disturbance of international patterns of state secrecy and surveillance, contestation of the state's monopoly over potent symbols of danger and practices of security, and the renegotiation of first world patterns of consumption that impinge on the future of the earth can both contribute to the democratic drive to participate in the events that define our lives and ventilate dead pockets of

air within contemporary states. As a variety of cross-national, extrastatist movements already in motion accelerate, they might extend the democratic ethos beyond the state through a pluralization of democratic spaces of action. They might compromise the state as the ultimate source of collective identity whenever a crisis arises and contest its monopoly over the rules of boundary crossing.

These, then, are some of the elements in the ethico-political sensibility of Michel Foucault: genealogies that dissolve apparent necessities into contingent formations; cultivation of care for possibilities of life that challenge claims to an intrinsic moral order; democratic disturbances of sedimented identities that conceal violence in their terms of closure; practices that enable multifarious styles of life to coexist on the same territory; and a plurality of political identifications extending beyond the state to break up the monopolies of state-centered politics.

But surely, politicization of the Foucauldian sensibility will continue to meet with opposition and outrage from the various fundamentalisms circulating through contemporary life. Nietzsche and Foucault both teach us how the more optimistic hopes of the Enlightenment on this score are unlikely to succeed. Theistic and secular priests persist as voices in and around us: the inertia of shared practices, forces of *ressentiment*, the pressures of guilt arising from ambivalent identifications, the effects of social coordination on the reification of selves and institutions—all these forces press upon the effective generalization of generous sensibilities. They make genealogies and politicizations of dogmatic identities into perpetual tasks. They render the move “beyond good and evil” always a movement and never a secure achievement. What, then, can be the terms of engagement between an ethical sensibility affirming care for the contingency of things and those moral fundamentalisms that oppose it as nihilistic, relativistic, or parasitic? (As if everyone, everything, and every institution were not parasitical in some way!)

One salutary possibility Foucault cultivates, I think, is to convert some relations of antagonism between fundamentalists and genealogists into those (as I call them) of agonistic respect. The effective possibilities here are limited, but they are nonetheless real. Agonistic respect constitutes an element in an impossible utopia, worth pursuit even amidst the impossibility of its final realization.

Agonistic respect, as I construe it, is a social relation of respect for the opponent against whom you define yourself even while you resist its imperatives and strive to delimit its spaces of hegemony. Care for the strife and interdependence of contingent identities, in which each identity depends upon a set of differences to be, means that “we” (the “we” is an invitation)

cannot pursue the ethic that inspires us without contesting claims to the universality and sufficiency of the moral fundamentalisms we disturb—hence genealogy and deconstruction. But this antagonism can be translated into something closer to agonistic respect in some cases, as each party comes to appreciate the extent to which its self-definition is bound up with the other and the degree to which the comparative projections of both are contestable. We opponents can become bonded together, partially and contingently, through an enhanced experience of the contestability of the problematic each pursues most fervently. This is what Nietzsche meant by the “spiritualization of enmity,”³⁴ although he thought the capacity to operationalize such a relationship was limited.

Agonistic respect differs from its sibling, liberal tolerance, in affirming a more ambiguous relation of interdependence and strife between identities over a passive letting the other be. The latter may be desirable on occasion, but it is less available in late-modern life than some liberals presume. It is not sufficient to shed “prejudice” because our identities are bound up with each other in a world where pressures to enact general policies are always active. It “cuts” deeper than tolerance because it folds contestation into the foundations of the putative identity from which liberal tolerance is often derived and delimited. But, still, it remains close enough to liberal tolerance to invite comparison and critical negotiation, pressing its debating partner to fold the spirit of genealogy more actively into its characterization of “the individual” and arguing against the spirit of complacency so often lodged in bifurcations between the private and the public.

There is considerable irony and foolishness in a call to agonistic reciprocity because it invites the fundamentalist to incorporate an element we endorse into its own identity. The invitation may be refused. But the call is made in the context of showing him through genealogy some of the ways in which his fundamentals too are questionable and contestable. And we do not demand that the fundamentalist incorporate the entire sensibility of the opponent as a condition of respect; we merely call on the fundamentalist to acknowledge the contestability of its claim to intrinsic moral order and to affirm self-restrictions in the way it advances *its* agenda in the light of this admission. In this way, space for politics can be opened through a degree of reciprocity amid contestation; new possibilities for the negotiation of difference are created by identifying traces in the other of the sensibility one identifies in oneself and locating in the self elements of the sensibility attributed to the other. An element of care is built into contestation and of contestation into care. But, as I have already said once, such invitations are often rejected.

So the difficulties continue. There are, additionally, numerous times and places where the terms of opposition are likely to remain implacable even

after the initial positions have been softened by reciprocal acknowledgment of the contestability of each stance. Debates over the di(per)versity of sexuality, over abortion, and, perhaps, over the right to take one's own life when one decides the time is right might have this character to varying degrees. Some fundamentalists who treat homosexuality as per-verse, for instance, might be moved to cultivate either a studied indifference or agonistic respect in relation to those who celebrate sexual di-versity. But they will be less likely to do so with respect to the issue of gay parents. Those who celebrate diversity here will have to try to disrupt their operational presumptions concerning what is "natural," maintaining confidence in the possible efficacy of genealogy and struggle in exposing the social constitution of the perversity they fear.³⁵ So, introduction of a Foucauldian sensibility more actively into the terms of political contestation, first, is likely to be refused by many constituencies and, second, to encounter obdurate instances of nonnegotiability even between constituencies willing to engage it.

The Foucauldian faith, if I may put it this way, is that more extensive cultivation of a political ethos of agonistic care makes a real difference in private and public life, even if it remains a minority stance within that life, for it is a political problematic of interrogation, engagement, and negotiation, not a political doctrine of intrinsic identity, consensus, and resolution. Its impossible utopia is agonistic respect among differences irreducible to a rational consensus in settings where it is often necessary to establish general policies. It locates freedom in the gaps and spaces fostered by these collisions and negotiations rather than in a pattern of harmonious unity or private sanctuary it hopes to realize. It counsels recurrent disturbance and negotiation of the numerous paradoxes of political life over attempts to conceal, resolve, or repress them.

These last reflections, linking an ethical sensibility to an ethos of politics, reveal another tension between these two registers amidst the durable connection between them. An *ethic of cultivation* requires attention to the nuances of life; it applies tactics patiently and experimentally to the self; it affirms ambiguity and uncertainty in the categories through which ethical judgment is made. But a *politics of engagement and insurgency* often generalizes conflicts so that one set of concerns becomes overwhelmed by others; it opens up the probability of more totalistic definitions of one side by its opponents; it sometimes foments rapid transformations exceeding the temporal and spatial rhythms of ethical cultivation. Cultivation of care for the contingency of things and engagement in political contestation, then, are locked into a relation of strife amidst their mutual implication.³⁶

There is no way to eliminate these tensions, unless you endorse some fictive model of political agency that has never been instantiated anywhere.

The tension already identified between genealogy and sensibility now catapults into the medium of politics. The struggle against resentment of a world in which "nothing is fundamental" involves a willingness to act in such ambiguous circumstances,³⁷ because although these two registers are in tension with each other, they are also interdependent: the ethical sensibility requires the ethos as one of its conditions of existence and vice versa. The aspiration is to draw agonistic respect from the effects of politics and to fold agonistic respect into the art of politics. The danger flows from suppression of such tensions and ambiguities in the name of private tranquility, rational harmony, or consummate political agency.

Perhaps I can allow Foucault to have the last word (for the moment):

There's an optimism that consists in saying that things couldn't be better. My optimism would consist rather in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstances than necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary, historical circumstances than of inevitable anthropological constants. . . . You know, to say that we are much more recent than we think, is to place at the disposal of the work that we do on ourselves the greatest possible share of what is presented to us as inaccessible.³⁸

NOTES

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), 83.

2. James Miller, "The Politics of Limits" (paper delivered at the 1991 convention of the American Political Science Association, September 1-4, Washington, DC), para. 13.

3. Michel Foucault, "Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now,'" in Donald Bouchard, ed., *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 226.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., 230. I bypass here Miller's crude charge that, in calling in the same essay for an attack on the "whole of society," Foucault legitimizes attempts to eradicate all social institutions. It becomes clear what Foucault has in mind when he says, "I believe, on the contrary, that this particular idea of the 'whole of society' [single quotes in original] derives from a utopian context." Foucault attacks "the dream" of "the whole of society" because the dream of wholeness and harmony it pursues requires the destruction, elimination, or repression of everything that does not fit in with it.

6. Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in *Foucault Live*, edited by Sylvere Lotringer and translated by John Johnston (New York: Semiotexte, 1989), 208.

7. I hope it becomes clear as we proceed that not all those who anchor their morality in the Law or the Good are locked into transcendental egoism. Only those who insist that the "other" cannot devise a morality *unless* he or she accepts these fundaments are so locked in. Thinkers like Foucault, Derrida, and Nietzsche are excellent at bringing out the subterranean fundamentalism of many who otherwise deny it.

8. A world with no commanding or designing god is likely to be marked by discordances, accidents, and chance. This is exactly the world in which Nietzsche and Foucault cultivate an ethical sensibility. Such a world, in turn, is not a likely source of a teleological ethic. A world with an omnipotent god, as the nominalists tried to show the Thomists, is unlikely to be one limited by any prior design of the world, for an omnipotent god flourishes in a highly contingent world it can vary in any way at any time; its omnipotence is threatened by any design that restricts it. A teleological morality without a god is problematic, then, but it is also difficult to construct one with an omnipotent god. It is not that a god filling the bill is impossible to construct, but such a delicate construction raises the question as to whether it is discovered or invented to fill the exact purpose it is supposed to reveal. On the other hand, an omnipotent god seems most compatible with a morality grounded in a transcendental imperative, and neo-Kantians have had a hell of a time demonstrating this imperative without recourse to such a deeply contestable faith. Hans Blumenberg pursues these issues, in his history of onto-theological aporias and debates that have marked the West since the inception of Augustinianism. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983). A last "theological" point: Although there are powerful pressures binding the command and design traditions to the authority of a god, a "post-Nietzschean" ethic need not resist every conception of divinity. A god as "absence," for instance, might be compatible with a post-Nietzschean sensibility. So might some versions of polytheism. I prefer "nontheistic reverence for the ambiguity of being."

9. In these comparisons I take Charles Taylor to represent the "teleological" model. His version of it, I think, brings out effectively assumptions implicit in the other formulations. He might resist the title I have bestowed on him, but the language through which his morality is couched is very teleological by comparison to the Nietzschean/Foucauldian sensibility defended here. Those are the only terms of comparison that interest me at the moment. See Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers*, vols. 1-2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

10. Notice how the favorite critique that neo-Kantians pose against teleo-communitarians loses its bite against post-Nietzscheans. They contend that it is impossible to reach universal agreement on the nature of the good, commending instead the same quest with respect to rights or the procedures of justice. I concur that a grounded consensus on the good is unlikely, even though I emphasize much more than neo-Kantians do how much established conventions are treated implicitly by neo-Kantians and teleo-communitarians as if they were so grounded, for both parties tend to eschew genealogy, limiting their ability to identify limits to pluralism in established regimes.

11. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 96. A powerful argument in Taylor's study is that advocates of "disengaged" morality are unable to account for the sources of their own moral inspirations. Bernard Williams, in an insightful review of this study, points to the strength of this argument, while claiming that Taylor's framework of analysis is not well suited to come to terms with Nietzschean thought: "I think that Taylor, in his search for the sources of value, seems not to have taken seriously enough Nietzsche's thought that if there is, not only no God, but no metaphysical order of any kind, then this imposes quite new demands on our self-understanding." *New York Review of Books*, November 4 (1990): 48. I concur with this judgment.

12. In *Identity and Difference*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), Martin Heidegger speaks of "the oblivion of difference." "We speak of the *difference* between Being and beings. . . . That is the *oblivion of difference*. The oblivion here to be thought is the veiling of the difference as such" (p. 50). The thought is similar to Nietzsche's elusive presentations of life. You never lift the veil of difference as such, for difference is that which differs from the organ-ized, conceptualized, fixed, and determinate. But you might encounter

the oblivion of difference through artful techniques; you might experience the way in which the organ-ization of experience draws on that which is itself not yet organ-ized.

13. Hence the indispensability of deconstruction and genealogy to the sensibility in question.

14. "But, in the end, I've become rather irritated by an attitude, which for a long time was mine, too, and which I no longer subscribe to, which consists in saying: our problem is to denounce and to criticize; let them get on with their legislation and their reforms. That doesn't seem to me the right attitude." Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Routledge, 1988), 209.

15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), #103, p. 104. Alan White gives an excellent reading of this formulation in *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

16. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, #149, 97. In *Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), #1019, Nietzsche lists six practices that have been wrecked by the church's monopoly and misuses of them. They are asceticism, fasting, the monastery, feasts, the courage to endure one's nature, and death. In each of these cases, Nietzsche would refigure the practice in question into one that fends off existential resentment and fosters a "nobility" that reaches beyond the ugly narcissism of good and evil. The notes in *Will to Power* that focus on the body also focus on the priority of techniques of the self over rational argumentation or direct reform of "the will" in fostering a generous ethical sensibility.

17. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968), #995.

18. Narcissus loved not himself but his image in the pond. The transcendental narcissist loves the image of itself that it projects into a transcendental command or direction.

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), #290, p. 233.

20. Nietzsche himself invokes the vocabulary of life in one way in his early work and in a modified way in his later work. I will not pursue that issue here, but it is the later uses that I am drawn to.

21. I generally try to avoid the language of "essentialism." It means, variously, a philosophy that pretends that a highest law, nature, or principle can be brought into full presence; the confidence that there is a fundamental law or purpose governing existence that can be more closely approximated in life through hermeneutic piety, and the claim that every actor and every interpreter invokes a set of fundamental assumptions about the character of being in every act and interpretation. Thus anyone can successfully accuse anyone else of "being an essentialist" in some way or another. Foucault, as I read him, is not an "essentialist" on the first two scores but is one on the third. He comes close to what one might call the "vague essentialism" advanced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970). "So how are we to define this matter-movement, this matter-energy, this matter flow, this matter in variation that enters assemblages and leaves them? It is a destratified, deterritorialized matter. It seems to us that Husserl brought thought a decisive step forward when he discovered a region of vague and material essences (in other words, essences that are vagabond, inexact and yet rigorous), distinguishing them from fixed, metric and formal essences" (p. 407). Husserl did not pursue this insight far enough. Deleuze and Guattari do in Plateau 6, "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" The strategies they endorse there are initially more extreme and dangerous than Foucault or Nietzsche would endorse. For American conceptions that cultivate a lawless essentialism more cautiously, see Jane Bennett, *Unthinking Faith and Enlightenment* (New York: New York University Press, 1986) and Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

22. Pierre Hadot, "Reflections on the notion of 'the cultivation of the self,'" in Timothy J. Armstrong, ed. and trans., *Michel Foucault: Philosopher* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 229.

23. Ibid., 230. Hadot goes on to say, "For my part, I believe firmly . . . in the opportunity for modern man . . . to become aware of our situation as belonging to the universe. . . . This exercise in wisdom will therefore be an attempt to open ourselves up to the universal."

24. This ontological level is the one that Habermasians, to date, have been hesitant to engage in Foucault. While they do not postulate a Law or Design in being, the terms through which "communicative ethics" is delineated seems to presuppose a plasticity of bodies and things that is challenged by Foucault. These two competing "communicative ethics" will enter into more reflective engagement with one another when both parties actively consider how differences in their most fundamental projections into nature and bodies enter into their divergent readings of "discourse." Habermas evinces awareness of this dimension when he engages communitarians. In one note, he indicates how Sandel would have to explicate the normative content of "community, embodied and shared self-understanding" more carefully to sustain his theory: "If he did, he would realize just how onerous the burden of proof is that neo-Aristotelian approaches must bear, as in the case of A. MacIntyre in *After Virtue*. . . . They must demonstrate how an objective moral order can be grounded without recourse to metaphysical premises." *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990). Habermas, in turn, would have to show how the conception of nature he presupposes in his discourse ethics is superior to the projection that Foucault endorses in "The Order of Discourse" and elsewhere. It only defers the engagement to reduce Foucault's options to a choice between a morally obnoxious "vitalism" or the model of communication Habermas himself invokes. I pursue this issue between Habermas, Foucault, and Taylor in "The Irony of Interpretation," in Daniel Conway and John Seery, eds., *Politics and Irony* (New York: St. Martin's, forthcoming).

25. Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in Michael Shapiro, ed., *Language and Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 125-27, emphases added. I find the second half of the last sentence to be more credible than the first. The first might suggest that the level of violence is the same in all instances and hence that it is always impossible to curtail violence.

26. The forgetfulness pursued here runs deeper than I have so far intimated. It is built into the very character of shared vocabularies, where the conditions of existence of a common language require an imposition of equivalencies within the concepts deployed that "forget" those excesses that do not fit into these configurations. Nietzsche discusses this level of forgetting in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random Books, 1967). In the texts in which this logic of equivalences is discussed, he also develops linguistic strategies that cut against it.

27. See "Polemics, Politics, and Problematisations: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 381-89.

28. Foucault, "An Ethics of Pleasure," in *Foucault Live*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer and translated by John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 267.

29. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, #212, p. 137.

30. Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 379. Foucault refuses the language of "regulative ideal" in pointing out his own double relation to consensus.

31. Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1984), 328.

32. These dimensions are developed more fully in Connolly, *Identity/Difference*, especially the last two chapters, and "Democracy and Territoriality, *Millenium*," December (1991): 463-84.

33. Quoted in Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 279. Thomas Keenan, in "The 'Paradox' of Knowledge and Power," *Political Theory* (February, 1987), discusses this statement thoughtfully and extensively.

34. "The Church has at all times desired the destruction of its enemies: we, we immoralists and anti-Christians, see that is to our advantage that the church exists. . . . In politics, too, enmity has become much more spiritual—much more prudent, much more thoughtful, much more *forbearing*. . . . We adopt the same attitude toward the 'enemy within': there too we have spiritualized enmity, there too we have grasped its *value*." Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1968), under "Morality as Anti-Nature," 43-44.

35. When presenting these thoughts, I have found that about the juncture someone will interrupt, charging: "Murder is perverse! Torture is perverse! Your ethics of 'generosity' sanctions these perversities. Certainly it lacks the ability to oppose them." But, of course, it does not carry such implications. Its governing sensibility of care for the interdependence and strife of identity/difference obviously opposes such acts. Indeed, very often, murder and torture express the very dogmatism of identity and abstract revenge against life that this sensibility seeks to curtail. So why is the charge so predictable at this juncture? I suspect that some who wrap themselves in a fictive law they cannot demonstrate would like to punish those who keep pounding away, first, at the paradox of identity and, second, at the cruelties installed in transcendental narcissism. The next time this charge is issued, examine the demeanor of the one who issues it. Does he look like he could kill you? Fortunately, there are still laws to restrain dogmatists from acting on these impulses.

36. These comments on tensions between an ethic of cultivation and a politics of critical engagement are inspired from one side by a critique delivered to me every other day by Dick Flathman and from another by a critique offered by Stephen White of a paper of mine at the 1991 meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Tampa, Florida entitled "Territoriality and Democracy." Flathman is tempted by an antipolitics that expects little of politics because of its ugly character. This sensibility is brought out effectively in *Toward a Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) and in a study of Hobbes soon to be published by Sage in its "Dialogue with Modernity" series. White finds my "ethic of cultivation" to be in conflict with a "politics of radical hope." I find the terms in which he recognizes the tension to be too stark for my position. I do not have "radical hopes" for a political transformation; rather, I support radical critiques that might open up new spaces for life to be while supporting new possibilities of democratic change. Together these two put considerable pressure on the position I seek to inhabit. It is only after I compare the tensions in my stance with those in their's, respectively, that my confidence begins to reassert itself.

37. How can resentment find expression against a world lacking the kind of agency capable of receiving this animus? It cannot. That is what makes existential resentment so dangerous, for it preserves itself by manufacturing viable substitutes on which to displace itself. It (re)invents the logic of good and evil to locate evil agents to hold responsible for an apparent contingency of things that *should not be this way*. But where, asks Nietzsche, comes this last "should not"? From the same pool of existential resentment that keeps refilling itself. The logic of good and evil keeps returning—hence the continuing need for genealogy. Not even an "overman" can simply surpass this logic. It is timely to laugh at the overman, too.

38. Foucault, "Practicing Criticisms," in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 256. Does Foucault underplay the tendency of "God," "the Law," "Nature," and "Intrinsic Purpose" to reinstate themselves offstage even as the contingencies within them are addressed on stage? Probably. But I prefer to say that he acts *as if* these enactments can be challenged through counterenactments. Girard, Freud, Lacan, and others show *how* final markers reinstate themselves even though they lack the transcendental basis that their most earnest supporters yearn for. In Freud, guilt flows from the ambivalent identification with a model that one has just (perhaps in the imagination) killed; it *precedes* the God and the Law invented retroactively to

explain it. Freud and others challenge moralisms that translate the experience of guilt into a transcendental source. But the next step is to develop *strategies* through which to politicize violences accompanying the conversion process. This is where the genius of Foucault shines.

William E. Connolly teaches political theory at Johns Hopkins University, where he is a professor of political science. He is the Series Editor of Contestations: Cornell Studies in Political Theory. His books include Political Theory and Modernity, Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox, and The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality.